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AUTHOR	Dickerson, Bette J.
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ABSTRACT

Past research on African American single mothers and their families has been conducted using conventional paradigms based upon models of the dominant culture. This practice has resulted in the creation of stereotypes and misconceptions about "the Black family." In this collection of original work by an interdisciplinary group of scholars, the African American mother-centered family is reevaluated to present a clearer and more affirming picture of its actual structure and function. Using an Afrocentric, feminist perspective, the essays examine the history, legal dilemmas, media images, and religious values of these families. The role of children, grandparents, fathers and other men, other support people, and the government are also reviewed. Presenting an informed, insider view of the African American single-mother household, the essays suggest effective and sensitive policy approaches and a more useful role for scholars/activists in this field. The essays are: (1) "Centering Studies of African American Single Mothers and Their Families" (Bette J. Dickerson); (2) "Female-Headed Households in Sociohistorical Perspective" (Norma J. Burgess); (3) "Women's Life-Affirming Morals and the Cultural Unity of African Peoples" (Annie Ruth Leslie); (4) "Teenaged Mothers: A Sense of Self" (Sharon Elise); (5) "Single Parenting: A Visual Analysis" (Dhyana Ziegler); (6) "The Impact of the Law on Single Mothers and the 'Innocent'" (Willa Mae Hemmons); (7) "African American Children in Single-Mother Families" (Suzanne M. Randolph); (8) "The Role of the Grandmother in Poor Single-Mother Families and Households" (Susan M. George and Bette J. Dickerson); (9) "Gender, Poverty, Culture, and Economy: Theorizing Female-Led Families" (Rose M. Brewer); and (10) "Empowerment through the 'Ordinary' Knowledge/Scholarship/Policy Nexus" (Bette J. Dickerson, Philipia L. Hillman, and Johanna E. Foster). (Each chapter contains references.) (AA)